

## NEWS

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Contact: Mark Gerth, Communications Manager  
(360) 586-8093  
[markg@arts.wa.gov](mailto:markg@arts.wa.gov)

### POETRY AND PRIZES IN STATE COMPETITION ARTS COMMISSION ANNOUNCES POETRY OUT LOUD WINNER

Olympia, WA – Rainier High School student Mollie McComb won the right to represent Washington state in the *Poetry Out Loud: National Recitation Competition*.

McComb recited *Ballad of Birmingham* by Dudley Randall and *Still I Rise* by Maya Angelou to garner first place in the Washington State competition.

A 12<sup>th</sup> grader at Rainier High School, she will receive \$200 from the Poetry Foundation, an all expenses paid trip to Washington, D.C. to represent Washington State in the National competition, and a \$500 stipend for her school to spend on the purchase of poetry books.

Second place saw a tie between 10<sup>th</sup> grader Carly Holbrooks of Olympia High School and senior Blake Lugar of Avanti High School.

Eight contestants from Thurston County recited works they selected from an anthology of more than 400 classic and contemporary poems. When McComb's teacher gave her the *Poetry Out Loud* anthology, "My interest in poetry was immediately sparked, and I read the anthology cover-to-cover in almost one night," she said.

Because of her interest and background in acting, she was "inspired to choose some powerful poems with very strong characters." McComb has been performing in musical theatre since she was 11, and plans to study vocal performance in college starting next year, hopefully at Whitworth in Spokane.

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The competition was held at the South Puget Sound Community College Center for the Arts on Thursday, April 6. High school students from eight Thurston County schools participated: North Thurston School District - North Thurston and River Ridge High Schools; Olympia School District - Avanti, Capital, and Olympia High Schools; Rainier School District - Rainier High; Tumwater School District - Black Hills High; Yelm School District - Yelm High.

Lucas Smiraldo, a spoken word performer and teaching artist, was the local coordinator for *Poetry Out Loud*, and served as the emcee for the regional final. Smiraldo has worked with high school students using poetry as a medium on many occasions. "Recitation helps students to experience poems as personal and relevant," he said.

A local panel judged the competition, Duane Cawthon, Poet; Dusti Demarest, Assistant Managing Editor, The Olympian; Jeff Kingsbury, Artistic Director, Capital Playhouse; and Michael Sandner, Director, Arts & Curriculum Integration, Bethel School District.

*Poetry Out Loud* is a national arts education program supported by the National Endowment for the Arts and the Poetry Foundation. Piloted this year in Thurston County, the competition encourages the mastery of great poetry by offering educational materials and a dynamic competition to high schools across the country.

The *Poetry Out Loud* Finals will be held May 16th, in Washington D.C. Semi-Finals will be held by geographic region throughout the day; selected students will advance to the Finals in the evening. A total of \$50,000 in scholarships and school stipends, including a \$20,000 college scholarship for the champion, will be awarded.

For more information on *Poetry Out Loud* visit [www.poetryoutloud.org](http://www.poetryoutloud.org).

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